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## MAKING OFF-DUTY WORTH WHILE

BY KATE BAKER, R.N.

*Brooklyn, N. Y.*

He was a wise physician who said that his best nurse was the one who put her own health first. Heretical as this may sound, how true it is! To my mind, the habit of taking off-duty regularly is most essential, as much for the patient's welfare as the nurse's.

Very many nurses are too prone to idle away their precious moments of leisure; it seems hardly worth while to change into street costume for maybe thirty minutes. But in twenty minutes one can cover a mile and to walk even that distance in brilliant sunshine, soft rain or sharp wind will be found most exhilarating and compensating. At first an errand may have to be invented for a pretext but if the nurse insists on sending herself out daily, it will not be long before she will find herself looking eagerly forward to her time in the open.

In large cities the museums, with their art galleries and treasures, the stores and the human throngs are evident delights: it is in the country where the nurse is apt to feel there is nothing to do to make out-door off-duty worth the effort.

Just here a word of caution. Do not grieve too much if separated from your club or headquarters. If you do not see your housemates you will not relate many petty incidents better left untold to an eager and sympathetic patient.

The thought of walking alone often debars a lonely nurse. Why go unaccompanied when some member or friend of the household may be also longing for a walk, or why scorn the faithful dog who is forever willing for a jaunt?

For country pastime in the summer the pedestrian-nurse will find a small handbook on the habits of birds or the study of wild flowers a great assistance toward delightful pursuits. For the nurse who cannot walk, there are always trolley trips; sometimes fishing is possible or, again, a boat may be hired very reasonably in which one can paddle out for pond-lilies, even if not a skilful oarsman.

Several years ago, the writer was sent with a patient to a private sanitarium. Following her arrival, she was summoned to the superintendent's office where he outlined her privileges and duties. A positive rule was that two hours daily must be spent away from the patient and out of doors. As the sanitarium was over a mile from the town and the month February, the rule seemed arbitrary, but as the days lengthened into weeks, how she blessed the decree that invariably

brought a change of atmosphere into the day's routine. A huge greenhouse was discovered a mile away. It was little trouble to get acquainted with the head florist and the memory still lingers of houses of perfect roses and carnations, cold frames filled with violets, and row upon row of stately lilies getting ready for their Easter parade.

By inquiring you will maybe find a sick baby in a town where no district nurse flourishes. The doctor will gladly introduce you to the poor mother who will be most thankful for your friendly assistance when she sees the baby gain.

Another case led a nurse to a health resort—a place turned over to the pursuit of "curing," therefore one where time was the chief asset of the patients. Aside from the "movies," the town's resources were *nil*, and what to do on each day's off-duty became a problem, yet never was it more essential to continue interesting and amusing than to her patient, shut in from every activity and away from kindred and friends.

The rector of the village church was asked if he had any shut-ins who would welcome a call. A most enthusiastic response followed and in no time a real social service was established. There were messages to be taken, advice given, letters written, gifts purchased, books exchanged; in fact, the work grew to such proportions that a social service worker was suggested for the vicinity by the doctor.

Just an allusion must be made to the daily, midwinter dips in the surf that one nurse enjoyed while specializing a hospital case in Hawaii. It is well to remind nurses that these opportunities for private as well as hospital work exist in many fascinating far-away places. To the nurse tired, for the time being, of private nursing, travel brings many compensations and she will generally find work at the journey's end, if desired. It is wonderful also how a trip to a convention will restore a nurse and replenish her mind for future cases.

The old adage that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy is always true and the nurse who makes systematic and intelligent use of her off-duty will find abundant reward.